

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Oct. 11, 2001**

## **Locke supports agriculture with allocation of federal agriculture grant**

**YAKIMA** – Gov. Gary Locke today emphasized his commitment to Washington agriculture by allocating over \$10 million in federal agricultural assistance to the state's growers.

The governor made the announcement at a press conference at the Washington State Fruit Commission office in Yakima. Locke was joined at the press conference by Jim Jesernig, director of the state Department of Agriculture, Rep. Jim Clements, Forrest Marshall, Ahtanum Irrigation District and Eric Melton, vice president of international marketing for the Washington State Fruit Commission

“As the state's second-largest export, agriculture is economically vital to thousands of families all across our state,” Locke said. “Nothing is more basic or more important than the abundance, affordability and safety of the food we eat. These funds will help promote and protect the state's agriculture industry.”

The governor highlighted two projects funded by the federal assistance -- a water storage project in the Yakima Valley and a multi-year program designed to urge Washington citizens to “Buy Washington” food and agricultural products.

Noting that no new water storage facilities have been built in the Yakima Basin since the 1930s, Locke presented \$375,000 to the Ahtanum Irrigation District. This will bring the district's Pine Hollow Reservoir project closer to reality. The funding also will allow a watershed assessment to be conducted concurrently with the project's Environmental Impact Statement. Locke included completion of the EIS in the budget he signed in June.

“Nothing is more important to the long-term economic future of the Yakima Basin than ensuring that irrigators, communities and fish have the water they need,” said Locke. “Washington must avoid a tragedy like the one we saw at Klamath Basin this summer when irrigation water was cut off in Oregon.”

The Pine Hollow project will restore water to some parts of the watershed that have been dry every summer for the last 40 years. Gov. Locke also announced that the state Department of Agriculture has earmarked \$500,000 of the grant funds for follow-up feasibility studies for Black Rock Reservoir, a second proposed water storage project. Another \$1.1 million is being set aside for other projects yet to be identified that will enhance the availability of water for irrigation.

Locke also announced that \$3 million of the grant funds will be used to initiate a statewide program to encourage consumers to “Buy Washington.” The governor has long advocated expanding overseas markets for Washington's agricultural products and plans to increase sales of Washington agricultural products here at home.

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“Overseas markets have become more competitive and imports have begun to flood our markets,” Locke said. “‘Buy Washington’ will help our producers compete for retail-shelf space by helping consumers identify locally-grown products.”

“The governor has made a big difference by promoting Washington agricultural products through trade missions to Asia and Mexico,” said Eric Melton. “We expect these funds and the governor’s personal support of “Buy Washington” to be a big help, too.

The Fruit Commission is one of 24 commodity commissions that will spearhead the “Buy Washington” program.

The following Washington projects will receive federal agriculture assistance funds.

- **Water storage (\$2 million)** – To complete studies needed to get two to three water storage projects, or other projects that enhance the availability of water for irrigation, ready to move to construction phase.
- **“Buy Washington,” small farm and direct marketing (\$3 million)** – For promotion of agriculture. Funds for small farm and direct marketing will be used to provide grants to local groups as worthwhile projects are identified.
- **Relief for raspberry growers (\$2.8 million)** – Growers have been particularly hard-hit by low prices and foreign competition without any monetary relief. This funding provides direct relief to raspberry growers based on a payout of 4.5 cents a pound for 2000 production, up to a maximum of \$125,000 for any one grower.
- **Trade issues (\$650,000)** – To help Washington’s agricultural industry fight trade barriers and research trade-equity issues. This complements \$350,000 provided this biennium and broadens the potential scope of activities. Specific projects will receive funding.
- **Market promotion and assistance (\$785,000)** – This complements \$350,000 provided this biennium and broadens the potential scope of activities. Specific projects will receive funding.
- **Matching funds for crop research (\$150,000)** – To be used by the Commission on Pesticide Registration to provide full or partial matching funds for research projects submitted by commodity groups that represent “minor, minor” crops (those not among the top 20 in farmgate value).
- **Cranberry promotion (\$25,000)** – To support a national generic promotional program based on the health benefits of eating cranberries.
- **Ag, fish and water (\$200,000)** – To support scientific research relative to the ag, fish and water process.

An uncommitted reserve of \$500,000 will be used for yet-to-be-identified projects or activities of general support for crops, or to augment already-identified projects or activities.

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Contact: Governor’s Communications Office, 360-902-4136  
Washington state Department of Agriculture, 360-902-1813

## Contacts for projects receiving federal agriculture assistance funds

Project	Contact	Phone number
Water storage	Steve George, Chair, Tri-County Water Resources Board	(509) 453-4749
	George Marshall, Ahtanum Irrigation District	(509) 249-0226
“Buy Washington”	Eric Melton, Vice President for International Marketing, Washington State Fruit Commission	(509) 453-4837
Small farm and direct marketing	Bonnie Rice, Coordinator, Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network	(360) 527-9426
Relief for raspberry growers	Henry Bierlink, Executive Director, Washington Red Raspberry Commission	(360) 354-8767
Trade issues	Pat Boss, Executive Director, Washington State Potato Commission	(509) 765-8845
Market promotion and assistance	Pat Boss, Executive Director, Washington State Potato Commission	(509) 765-8845
Matching funds for crop research	Alan Schreiber, Administrator, Washington State Commission on Pesticide Registration	(509) 539-4537
Cranberry promotion	Merri Erickson, Chair, Washington Cranberry Alliance	(360) 267-3523
Ag, fish and water	Steve George, Member, Ag, Fish and Water Executive Board	(509) 453-4749